



Éditorial

Un tournant

Un tournant ? Non, rassurez-vous, il ne s'agit pas de ces réflexions que provoquent automatiquement les années dont le dernier chiffre est un zéro, à plus forte raison trois zéros. Mais, tout simplement, d'un constat dont il faudra tirer les conséquences lors de la préparation du prochain budget, c'est-à-dire dans un an.

La CEE-ONU est un organisme vivant dans un monde qui change. L'équilibre des fonctions et les domaines couverts doivent donc évoluer. Ne serait-ce qu'au cours des six derniers mois la CEE-ONU a pris des initiatives ou répondu à des demandes qui marquent cette évolution : le débat sur les conséquences économiques du vieillissement de la population a ouvert un nouveau champ de réflexion qu'il faudra exploiter; le conflit en Yougoslavie et le retard pris par les pays du sud-est de l'Europe ont amené les Comités à insérer leurs problèmes spécifiques dans leur programme de travail et le Centre du gaz a identifié les décisions à prendre et les réparations à faire pour assurer l'approvisionnement en énergie de la Yougoslavie et de la Bosnie-Herzégovine; le secrétariat a demandé à des universitaires de cette région de critiquer ses propres analyses et propositions et, en coopération avec le SECI, a organisé une conférence où les pays de la région ont défini leurs priorités nationales et régionales dans les domaines de l'énergie, des transports et de la gestion de l'eau avant de les soumettre au Pacte de stabilité; dans un tout autre domaine, la préparation régionale de Pékin + 5 a pris progressivement de l'ampleur et le secrétariat est sollicité par New York pour préparer Copenhague + 5; un nouveau groupe consultatif a été lancé sur la protection et la mise en œuvre des droits de propriété intellectuelle pour l'investissement.

La CEE-ONU a donc montré de la flexibilité. Elle a montré qu'elle était apte à répondre aux demandes, précisément parce que, au cours des années, elle a investi dans l'analyse des économies européennes,

(Suite en p. 2.)

(For the English translation, see p. 16.)

UN/ECE Regional Hearing



Interview with

H.E. Mr. Guido de Marco,

President of Malta

ECE Highlights: *As Chairman of the UN/ECE Regional Hearing for the United Nations Millennium Assembly, what are the main conclusions you would draw from the debates?*

H.E. Mr. Guido de Marco: The Regional Hearing was a useful and successful event where a large number of NGOs voiced their concern from particular aspects and angles. As I stated in my concluding statement at the Regional Hearing, an opportunity was provided for a micro-approach to issues where specific problems were highlighted and proposals on how to address such problems given.

The Regional Hearing highlighted the concern that the United Nations in the twenty-first century should retain its centrality and relevance—a number of concerns were raised as to the sense of frustration being perceived at the

marginalization of the United Nations. Recent events in Kosovo were given as an example where the Organization had been completely bypassed and concerns were raised about the precedent that this could set for the future. As I stated throughout the Hearing and in my concluding statement, an overriding theme for the United Nations in the twenty-first century was the need to examine the question of the use of force and those questions relating to what action could be taken in the case of massive violations of human rights. Another issue which was raised was the need to retain the centrality of the General Assembly. Some NGOs expressed the wish to be further involved in the work of this Assembly through some sort of transformation along the lines of national parliaments. I believe



that this will be a major issue which the United Nations will have to face in the coming century but, as I pointed out, Governments and Member States remain the main depository of responsibility within the context of the General Assembly.

Another overriding issue underscored by the Regional Hearing was the attachment to human rights. In this sector problems raised related both to the double standards and the need for a more comprehensive approach where development issues are discussed as well as the need for effective implementation in specific sectors such as women's rights, racism and xenophobia. One other proposal which was underlined repeatedly by NGOs was the need to institute some form of a civil society forum. Indeed the proposals were varied but the general thrust for further involvement by grass-roots society and NGOs was loud and clear.

Overall I would state that the message was one of optimism. The fact that such a forum could point to so many problems and come up with suggestions on how to improve the United Nations is in and of itself a message of confidence and hope that the institution can deal with such questions in a credible and effective manner.

One issue which was highlighted during the Regional Hearing was related to the right to intervene in a country where human rights are at threat. What is your opinion on this issue?

Indeed as I stated above, this was one of the major issues which I felt required highlighting during the debates. We must have the ability to look back in time, not to become the slaves of history but to chart our path to the future. Recent events in Kosovo highlight the issues which need to be examined. In a sense this situation has created a number of questions and queries which require deliberation. The United Nations has to delve into such issues if it is to retain its credibility in the twenty-first century. Actually one of the most poignant questions was the relationship

Un tournant

(Suite de la p. 1.)

négocié des conventions et des standards et développé un réseau de correspondants gouvernementaux d'experts. Il faut donc poursuivre ces investissements.

Dès lors, tout est-il pour le mieux ? Je ne le pense pas. D'une part, la CEE-ONU n'est pas utilisée à la mesure de son potentiel défini par les investissements que je viens de mentionner, sa qualité de forum neutre et son aptitude à faire travailler ensemble, avec succès, des pays et des entreprises aux intérêts divergents. Ceci, à la fois parce qu'elle est mal connue et, sans doute, parce qu'elle est un lieu multilatéral neutre. D'autre part, parce que, même sous-utilisée, la CEE-ONU, avec le programme de travail actuel et les initiatives prises, marche à la limite de ses capacités physiques.

Il faudrait concentrer le programme de travail dans les secteurs prioritaires, utiliser les ressources en temps ainsi libérées pour investir dans un ou deux domaines qui sont mal couverts par les institutions existantes et sont en passe de devenir importants, saisir les tâches que l'actualité commande et aussi faire mieux utiliser (assistance technique) et connaître (information) les produits de la CEE. À titre d'illustration, ne vaudrait-il pas mieux publier deux Étude sur la situation économique de l'Europe par an, au lieu de trois, afin d'avoir le temps d'organiser des débats dans les pays sur les thèmes des Études et investir sur des sujets comme la distribution des revenus ou les politiques sectorielles ?

Le Secrétaire exécutif,
Commission économique pour l'Europe

Yves BERTHELOT

between the use or threat of use of force and when such is justified. Clearly precedents have been set as to how the United Nations deals with massive violations of human rights in a given State. If we are to guard against the marginalization of the United Nations and its principal organs we must ensure that such issues are discussed and dealt with by Member States so that we may set clearer parameters for the future.

Do you think that the United Nations of the twenty-first century will be different from the one of the twentieth century? Would certain countries want to change it?

I think that any institution, if it is to retain its relevance, must be able to change. I do believe that the United Nations during the twenty-first century will be a changed institution. It will have to live up to the challenges of its time. During its first fifty years the United Nations was an institution operating in a different international context. Cold war politics pervaded even the United Nations and often dictated its agenda. With the end of the cold war what we have witnessed is a proliferation of the United Nations agenda. Issues such as development and the environment have come to dominate our agenda as indeed the issue of human rights. Perhaps the best achievement is that we have come to recognize that many of our problems require international cooperation and cannot be dealt with in isolation. To enable us to do this we have to move to give real effect to multipolarism. In this way the United Nations can chart the course to real consensus building which is required in all fields, whether it be in terms of economic and social development, human rights or peace and stability.

As I stated in my concluding statement at the Regional Hearing, in a sense the United Nations is travelling through a tunnel and has not yet seen the light at its end. We are passing through a time of transition—this is in itself healthy if we take this opportunity to question and examine future paths—we must learn from history and from recent events to enable us to build a better United Nations for the twenty-first century.

In the book you wrote with Ambassador Michael Bartolo entitled A Second Generation United Nations, you proposed a certain number of changes. Some of them, such as the new role of the Trusteeship Council, have been repeated by the Secretary-General. How do the recommendations you made a few years ago stand today?

The suggestions that were made in *A Second Generation United Nations* in many ways remain relevant today. Throughout the process of reform which started through various working groups, a number of our proposals have in fact been taken on board by Member States—indeed the

question of the strengthening of the role of the President of the General Assembly and others relating to the reform of the agenda of the United Nations have in some way or another been addressed. Other proposals still require deliberation. Reform of the Security Council still evades us, yet in today's context what is of concern is the possible marginalization of the Council and the need to ensure the centrality of this principal organ in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Many have placed the blame on the inability of the Security Council to act, as in the case of Kosovo, on the question of veto. We must recognize the international responsibility which certain members, chiefly the permanent members, have in the maintenance of international peace and security. However, one could contemplate the realistic deliberation of a system of weighted voting which would underscore the international responsibility of the permanent members whilst guaranteeing its ability to act.

With regard to the reform of the Trusteeship Council, it is my opinion that current events have shown even more clearly the need for reform. One of the suggestions that I have put forward is that the notion of trust as originally envisaged by the Trusteeship Council to be applicable to territories could be applied to peoples. This would in a sense address the many problems we have witnessed of late where the rights of peoples within a State are trampled upon and disregarded. The notion of trust as applicable to peoples would to a certain extent avoid the more difficult questions of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Thus I believe it would be worthwhile for Member States to consider such a proposal which was also endorsed by the Secretary-General.

What role do you foresee for the United Nations at the regional level?

The United Nations in the twenty-first century needs to retain its strong centrality. To do this it needs to have a strengthened core with a coherent vision. This should be our objective and indeed has been recognized by the Secretary-General himself who has already undertaken a number of reforms at the Secretariat level. However, the overriding vision towards reform has always been to let those who do it best do it. In other words, there are obvious strengths in an organization operating at the regional level. In this respect the focus of the United Nations at the regional level in the field of statistics and the addressing of specific problems related to particular regions should remain and be strengthened. ECE's focus on subregional issues is in fact one of its strengths. The regional preparation of world conferences and platforms is another area which has proved both useful and complementary to international processes. The continued focus on comparative

advantages of regional over global approaches is, to my mind, the crucial issue to be dealt with during the twenty-first century.

What can a country like Malta do to improve the functioning of the United Nations?

Many have asked this question to which I always respond that it was Malta which had first come up with the idea of the common heritage of mankind as applicable to the oceans and subsoil thereof. This was a seminal idea which in a real sense started a "quiet revolution" and has today become both a legal and institutional reality.

Since then, Malta has continued to contribute to the improvement of the functioning of the United Nations by proposing a number of ideas such as the characterization of ageing and climate change as common concerns, the revitalization of the General Assembly and most recently the reform of the Trusteeship Council. These are in them-

selves proposals which seek to direct the focus of the United Nations to emerging challenges and concerns and to build relevance into the functioning of the Organization.

It was also Malta which proposed that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe be designated as the regional organization for peacekeeping in terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. This too was a proposal which was codified both by the United Nations and OSCE and is at the basis of the cooperative agreements between the two organizations.

Often I have stated that the power of a State like Malta lies in its absence of power normally associated with military or economic might. Ideas such as these, which have made a real contribution to the United Nations and other organizations, stem from a dispassionate concern with real challenges that a State like Malta can recognize. □

SPECIAL FEATURE

The European Regional Hearing for the Millennium Assembly Tackles the Issue of Strengthening the United Nations in the Twenty-first Century

The General Assembly of the United Nations decided to designate its fifty-fifth session the Millennium Assembly and to convene a Millennium Summit of Heads of State and Government. In so doing, the United Nations wishes to stress that the year 2000 constitutes a unique and symbolically compelling moment to put forward its vision of the international community in a new era, and to give a new impetus to the Organization in meeting the challenges of the next century.

As part of the process leading up to the Millennium Assembly, the Secretary-General requested the five regional commissions of the United Nations to hold regional meetings in order to gather the views of Member States and of civil society, including NGOs, on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. The results of the regional hearings will be drawn upon by the Secretary-General for his report to Member States for the Millennium Assembly.

The hearing for the ECE region took place on 7-8 July 1999, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Guido de Marco, President of Malta. It was attended by 15 panellists and participants from Governments, NGOs, academia, research institutions, the private sector and the media, as well as parliamentarians and public figures. Three panels discussed human rights,

sustainable development and peace and disarmament in consecutive half-days. These sessions were moderated by the highest United Nations authority in the field and debated by five distinguished panellists selected among NGO representatives, academics and opinion leaders.

The first session of the debate was moderated by Mrs. Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and was dedicated to the question of human rights in the age of globalization. Mr. Yves Berthelot, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe, oversaw the debates of the afternoon session which addressed the issue of reconciling economic efficiency with legitimate social and environmental concerns. On 8 July, debates highlighted the issue of peace and disarmament. Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in these matters, moderated the meeting.

At its concluding session, the regional hearing focused exclusively on the challenging issue of how to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. The debates were chaired by H.E. Mr. Guido de Marco, President of Malta, stimulated by two moderators, Mr. Yves Berthelot, Executive Secretary of ECE, and Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Confer-

ence on Disarmament, and initiated by two panellists, Mrs. Brigita Dahl, Speaker of the Parliament, Stockholm, Sweden, and Mr. Theo Van Boven, Professor, Faculty of Law, Maastricht, the Netherlands.

Perhaps one of the strongest and most recurrent messages put forward by the participants was the need for the United Nations to put the human dimension at the centre of all of its activities. While this might be implicit in the field of human rights, it is less obvious in matters of security where the broad concept of "human security" is emerging, and in the economic sphere which cannot be dissociated from its social implications. Considering the growing complexity and interdependency of problems in the new millennium, a number of participants urged the United Nations to adopt systematically a more integrated approach to its various activities and to prioritize these activities.

While it was widely acknowledged that during its first fifty-three years of existence, the United Nations had been successful in adopting a whole range of extremely valuable norms, standards and conventions, there was a genuine concern that these were perhaps not publicized enough and certainly not sufficiently implemented. To be effective in the next millennium, the United Nations needs to make implementation and compliance its top priorities.

To continue to be relevant and effective in the new millennium, participants also believed that the United Nations needs to adapt to evolving concepts and practices. One such example is the concept of sovereignty. New actors are appearing on the international stage that must be contended with: parliamentarians, local authorities, business and civil society. The United Nations needs to define new partnerships accordingly. Particular attention was given to the issue of cooperation with regional organizations including NATO, the Council of Europe and OSCE. These relationships must be further developed within the parameters of the Charter.

A number of NGOs expressed a strong desire to see their partnership with the United Nations evolve on a more equal footing. To that effect, they aspire to the establishment of a Civil Society Forum and to the creation of mechanisms giving them better access to the various United Nations bodies.



From an institutional point of view, participants stressed the evident need for the United Nations to enjoy adequate resources. They pointed out the huge gap between the actual level of financial endowment of the United Nations and the amount which would realistically be required for it to carry out its multifaceted mandate. Some specifically referred to the insufficient allocations granted to the human rights budget.

Still on the institutional front, participants concurred in believing that the United Nations should address the problem of its democratic deficit. Reform of the Security Council was topping the agenda in this respect. While enlargement of membership or elimination of the veto system were popular issues, concerns for the incidence of these proposals on the effectiveness of the Security Council were also heard. The Chairman of the hearings suggested alternatives such as having a minimum of two blocking vetoes instead of one, or considering introducing weighing votes. The role of the General Assembly was also alluded to and it was suggested that it meet in various sessions year round.

The hearings were concluded with remarks by President de Marco on the United Nations' recent experiences in the Balkans which raise major issues of principles for the future. How should the United Nations deal with massive violations of human rights? The United Nations had observers in Srebrenica yet could not prevent the massacres that occurred. How should the United Nations handle the precedent of Kosovo where Member States intervened outside the framework of the Charter? These are the type of problems that must be resolved for the United Nations to perform to its full potential in the twenty-first century.

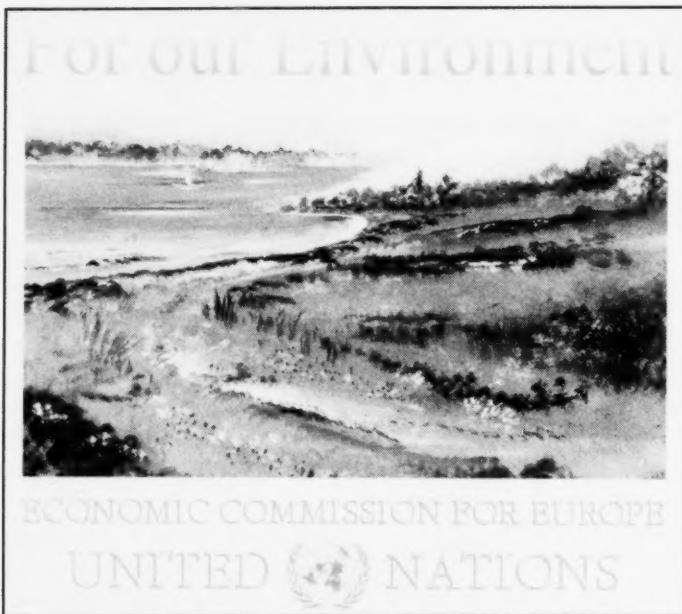
But at the end of the day, it was recognized that Member States bear the main burden of what the United Nations will be in the twenty-first century. □

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Ministerial Conference, London, 16-18 June 1999

The Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health met in London on 16-18 June 1999 and brought together more than 900 participants from across Europe, including 72 Environment and Health Ministers. Fifty countries adopted the London Declaration,

affirming their commitment to specific measures that will reduce the harmful effects of environmental degradation on human health. The Conference also adopted the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Charter on Transport, Environment and Health.



The Convention and its new Protocol were also the subject of several workshops and side events during the meeting. NGOs, academics, representatives from national water and health administrations and from international organizations were present and shared their experiences. During the Conference, the Ministers also reported on the follow-up to the Regional Ministerial Conference on Transport and Environment. Back in November 1997 they adopted a Programme of Joint Action to reduce the impact of transport on the environment and they therefore took advantage of their meeting in London to take stock. □

Negotiators reach final agreement on innovative protocol to combat air pollution

Negotiators meeting at UN/ECE in Geneva put the final touches to a new Protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. The goal of this innovative Protocol is to cut emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, ammonia and volatile organic compounds so as to protect our environment and our health from the effects of acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone. It is the first protocol to tackle several pollutants and several effects so comprehensively.

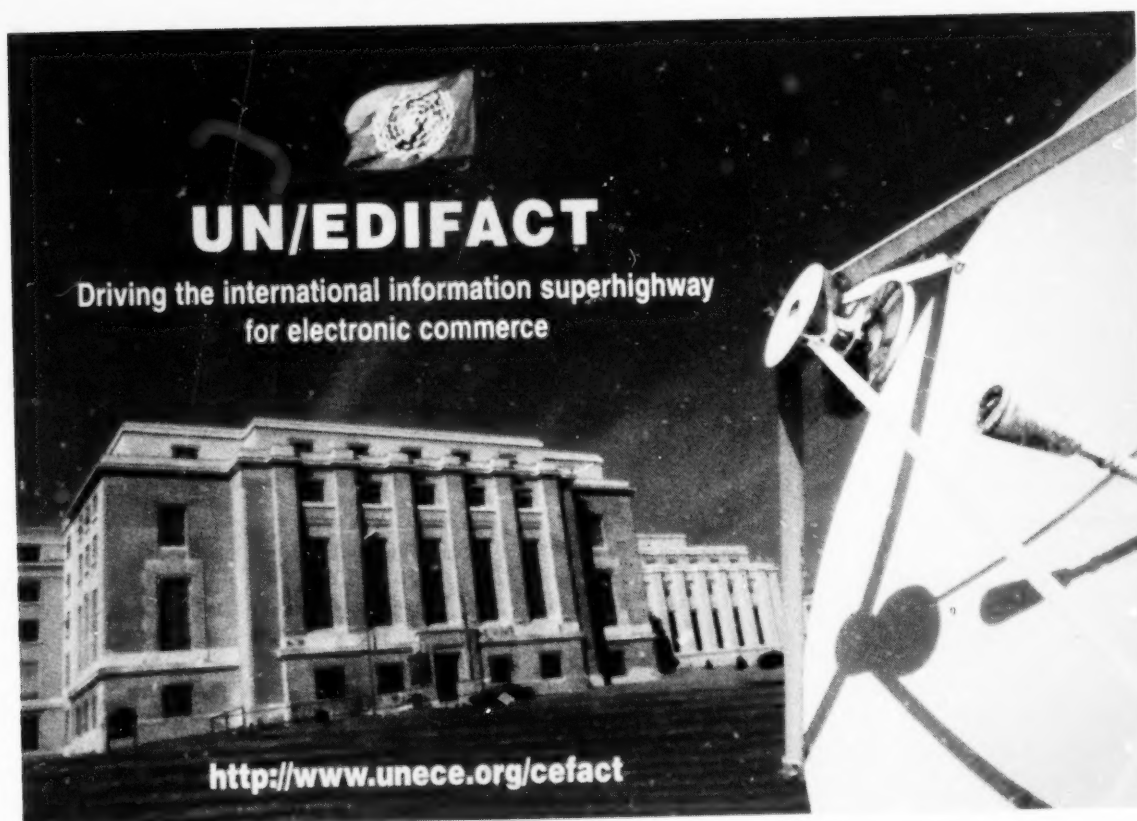
The Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone lays down differentiated emission ceilings for the countries that sign up to it. These ceilings are based on the impact that their emissions have on public health and on the vulnerability of the environment that they pollute. According to the emission ceilings, most countries will have to make sweeping cuts—some by as much as 90 per cent—by 2010. The few countries

whose emissions cause little damage will have to stabilize their emissions. The multi-pollutant, multi-effect Protocol also foresees limit values for new and existing stationary sources of pollution, in particular large combustion plants, and for new mobile sources, such as cars and lorries.

Moreover, the Protocol introduces mandatory measures for agriculture in an attempt to control emissions of ammonia (manure, artificial fertilizer). It is the first Protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to cover agriculture.

The Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone will be ready for adoption at a meeting of environment ministers in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 30 November which will also mark the twentieth anniversary of the Convention. □

United Nations and OASIS Join Forces to Produce Global XML Framework for Electronic Business



The United Nations body for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) have joined forces to initiate a worldwide project to standardize XML (extensible mark-up language) business specifications. UN/CEFACT and OASIS have established the Electronic Business XML Working Group to develop a technical framework that will enable XML to be used in a consistent manner for exchanging all electronic business data. Industry groups currently working on XML specifications will participate in the 18-month project. Results of the Electronic Business XML Working Group will be placed in the public domain on XML.org and uncefact.org.

OASIS President, Bill Smith (Sun Microsystems) explains: "To be effective for global business, it is vital that XML specifications are based on a common framework. Because that framework does not yet exist, there are many—often competing—efforts under way worldwide. This new Electronic Business XML Working Group will end the confusion and duplication of effort that currently exists."

Ray Walker, Chairman of the UN/CEFACT Steering Group states: "This is good news especially for small and medium-sized companies, developing countries and economies in transition. In the long term, this initiative will contribute to the growth of world trade."

Carol Cosgrove-Sacks, Director of the Trade Division, UN/ECE, adds: "The opportunities for business development that can result in matching the existing EDI technology with XML are very exciting. By incorporating the new technique into their existing operations, companies will be able to offer a more coherent and efficient service to their customers. The aim of this significant development is to enable large and small international supply chains to be linked to the Internet in an innovative way."

The Electronic Business XML Working Group will be led by Klaus-Dieter Naujok of the Harbinger Corporation, a senior member of the UN/CEFACT Steering Committee, and Robert S. Sutor of IBM, Chief Strategy Officer of OASIS. □

"CONVERGE, GET BIGGER OR DIE"

Does this adage apply to the European gas and electricity utilities?

"Whereas the deregulation of the gas and electricity markets in the United States and the United Kingdom is having a strong impact on the convergence of gas and electric utilities in these countries, it is unlikely to have the same impact on continental European gas and electric utilities", said Mr. George Kowalski, Director of the UN/ECE Energy Division. "Although the trend towards the liberalization and opening up of markets in continental Europe is well under way, convergence is likely to be much less, at least for the time being. The current merger frenzy in the oil sector may be a harbinger of what might be in store for the gas and electricity industries", stated Mr. Kowalski. "Market opening and liberalization have often been followed by the concentration of capital and labour in ever bigger sized corporate units. The proverb that 'small is beautiful' is being severely tested."

While the experience of deregulation in the United Kingdom and the United States suggests that there will be some degree of convergence in Europe, it is, however, not likely to lead to the formation of multi-energy companies, simultaneously active in both the gas and electricity sectors. Gas companies will remain largely gas oriented while electric companies will remain mainly providers of electricity. The current trend in Europe is towards partnerships between gas and electricity companies, for example, in the construction and operation of gas-fired power plants or in trading activities, such as the joint marketing of gas and electricity.

These are just some of the main conclusions of a Conference on the opening up of the gas and electricity markets in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe, organized recently in Prague, jointly by the UN/ECE Energy Division, the Czech Gas and Oil Asso-



ciation and Transgas, the major Czech gas company. The Conference, attended by more than 100 key officials and experts from the gas and electricity industries, addressed the issues of convergence of the gas and electricity markets, the strategic impact of the opening up of electricity and gas markets, the state of restructuring and privatization of the electricity and gas utilities in central and eastern Europe and the implications of the EU Electricity and Gas Directives. The long-term impact of liberalization was discussed in the context of sustainable energy development and policies. The conference participants concluded that liberalization would, in the short term, promote overall economic efficiency but the impact on the sustainable development and use of energy over the longer term was more difficult to predict. □

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

East-West Cooperation

The Conference on Women's Entrepreneurship organized by UN/ECE in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the OECD Leed Programme was held in Brijuni, Croatia, from 21-22 October 1999 within the framework of the Central European Initiative (CEI). The Conference was the follow-up to one of the recommendations made at the Meeting of the Heads of Governments of the CEI Member States held in Croatia, in November 1998.

The main objectives of the Conference were:

- To promote the development of women's entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills in the countries in transition (CITs);*
- To convince and encourage policy makers in CEI member States to give more attention to an enabling environment for greater contribution of women to transition processes;*

—To strengthen the existing networks by preparing bankable project proposals and to review and propose the support measures by governments, regional and local authorities; and

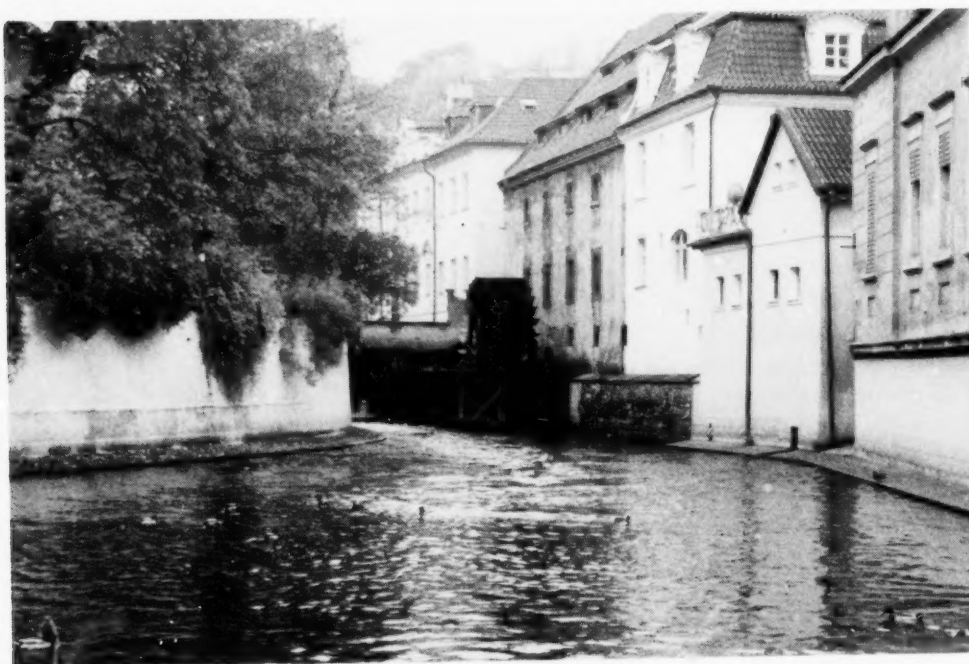
—To encourage closer cooperation with the international organizations on women's entrepreneurship.

Opening addresses were made by Ms. Danuta Hübner, Deputy Executive Secretary of UN/ECE, Mr. Sergio Arzeni, Head of the OECD Leed Programme, high-level representatives of the Government of Croatia including Mrs. Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former UN/ECE

Deputy Executive Secretary, as well as the secretariat of the CEI.

UN/ECE prepared a discussion paper on "A way ahead—Proposal for support measures by governments, regional and local authorities and financial institutions" (OPA/AC.14/1) which can be obtained from the UN/ECE Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities. The outcome of the Conference will be reflected in a short Final Statement which will highlight the main proposals that should be forwarded for endorsement to the forthcoming meeting of the CEI Heads of Governments during the 2nd CEI Economic Forum to be held in November 1999 in Prague, Czech Republic. □

Green light to the European inland waterway network



The European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) entered into force on 26 July 1999. This international Agreement, done by all European countries in Geneva in the framework of UN/ECE, identifies the main international inland waterway links in Europe and establishes uniform infrastructure and operational parameters to which they should conform. It underlines the importance of inland water transport which, in comparison with other modes of inland transport, presents economic and environmental advantages and may, therefore, contribute to reducing congestion, traffic accidents and negative environmental

impacts in the pan-European transport system, particularly along main congested international transport corridors in Europe.

The international E inland waterways network defined in the Agreement covers around 28,000 km of main navigable rivers and canals and about 350 ports of international importance extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural mountains and connecting 37 countries in Europe and beyond. The AGN completes the already existing UN/ECE European Agreements AGR, AGC and AGTC, which established the international E road, E rail and E combined transport networks respectively. □

ECE warns that the task of economic regeneration in south-east Europe is being underestimated

The second issue of this year's *Economic Survey of Europe* was made available at the annual substantive meeting of ECOSOC held in Geneva from 5-30 July 1999. In addition to an update on the current economic situation and outlook in the ECE region, the *Survey* opens with a discussion on the economic problems facing the countries of south-east Europe in the wake of the Kosovo conflict.

Post-war Reconstruction and Development in South-East Europe

Without minimizing the direct impact of military operations on Yugoslavia or of the considerable burden of caring for the refugees in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, the *Survey* stresses that the economic consequences have also been severe for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania. These are countries where the transition process from central planning to a market economy has proved extremely difficult—partly because of highly unfavourable initial conditions, the lack of historic traditions in institutional development, their distance from the major west European economies, and not least a long series of external economic shocks starting with the collapse of the CMEA

and passing by the effects of international sanctions on Iraq and Yugoslavia, and ending at present with the Kosovo conflict. History matters, and the *Survey* stresses that if south-east Europe is not to continue to be a source of instability and of threats to European security then the chronic poverty and economic stagnation of the region must be addressed. Simply repairing the damage incurred as a result of the Kosovo conflict will only return the region to the status quo ex ante, which itself was a major factor in the crisis to begin with. Hence the stress on reconstruction and development of the region as a whole.

Given the scale of structural problems in the region and the need to start dealing with them promptly, in order to create positive expectations and a momentum for change, the *Survey* argues that the best way to get things moving is to follow the example of the United States vis-à-vis western Europe in 1948 and supply them with significant amounts of grant aid, although this would remain subject to agreed programmes being carried out. The *Survey* emphasizes that in any reconstruction and development programme for south-east Europe, Yugoslavia must play a central role.

Economic Survey of Europe 1999, No. 2, Sales No. E.99.II.E.3. US\$ 40. □

Sales of industrial robots are booming in Europe and North America but plummeting in Japan and Asia

Worldwide sales of industrial robots peaked in 1990, when they reached over 81,000 units. Following the recession in 1991-1993, worldwide sales of industrial robots plummeted to about 54,000 units in 1993. The world robot market then started a period with a sharp recovery which peaked in 1997 when it reached a level of 85,000 units. In 1998, however, sales plummeted by over 16 per cent to 71,000 units mainly as a result of plummeting sales in Japan and the Republic of Korea. When Japan and the

Republic of Korea are excluded, the remaining world market shows an impressive increase of 16 per cent in 1998, compared with 1997.

According to *World Robotics 1999*, total accumulated yearly sales, since industrial robots began to be introduced to industries at the end of the 1960s, amounted at the end of 1998 to some 1,020,000 units. Many of the early robots, however, have by now been taken out of service. The stock

of industrial robots in actual operation is therefore lower. ECE and IFR estimate the total worldwide stock of operational industrial robots at the end of 1998 at 720,000 units compared with just under 700,000 units at the end of 1997, representing an increase of 3 per cent over 1997. It is estimated that the worldwide stock of operational industrial robots will increase to 800,000 units at the end of 2002.

The annual publication *World Robotics* is a joint effort of the Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) and the International Federation of Robotics (IFR). For the first time *World Robotics* includes an editorial, where a well-known person with a worldwide reputation is invited to give his/her view of the future of robotics. The first editorial is written by Mr. Marvin Runyon, Postmaster and Chief Executive Officer of the United States Postal Service. □

World chemical production hits 1.5 trillion dollar level

UN/ECE Releases Latest Chemical Statistics in its *Annual Review*

According to the latest review of the chemical industry, just published by UN/ECE, world chemical production in 1998 rose to nearly US\$ 1.5 trillion, with western Europe having the largest share at roughly 35 per cent and North America 29 per cent. The single largest chemical-producing country was the United States; with Germany being the largest European producer. Per capita consumption of chemicals in North America, at nearly US\$ 1,300, was higher than in western Europe, where the figure stood at

just over US\$ 1,000. In stark contrast, eastern and central European per capita consumption was a mere US\$ 159.

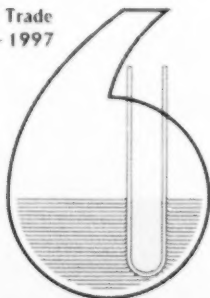
The 175-page *The Chemical Industry in 1998: Annual Review* discusses in detail recent general macroeconomic advances and chemical industry developments in the industrialized world—principally in the 55 member countries of UN/ECE. The *Review* also includes a detailed statistical review of production and trade in chemical products. A special chapter in this year's *Review* focuses on how the chemical industry in the north-eastern part of Germany, formerly the German Democratic Republic, has developed over the past decade. With the privatization in 1997 of the last major chemical estate in the area, the chemical industry of that region is now completely in the private sector. Growth in chemical industry production in 1998 in the region grew 6.4 per cent over 1997 but has still only achieved half the turnover of 1989. The *Review* also gives the annual gross output of the chemical industry, as well as production and trade data for some 80 chemicals and chemical products, for the period 1995-1997 for nearly 50 countries in the region covered by UN/ECE.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY IN 1998

Annual Review

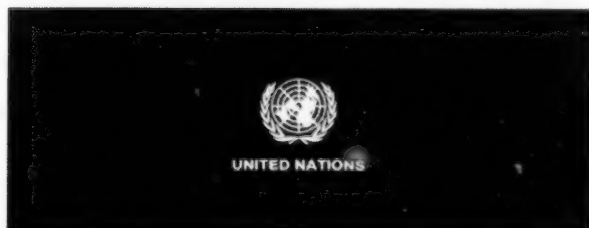
Production and Trade
Statistics 1995-1997



The Chemical Industry in 1998: Annual Review, Sales
No. E.99.II.E.9. US\$ 100. □

International Environmental Law Works Air Pollution Review Proves it

The air that we breathe is definitely cleaner now than a decade or two ago. In Europe, sulphur emissions have halved since 1980, nitrogen oxide emissions (NOx) are down 16 per cent on their 1990 levels, emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are 20 per cent lower than in 1990, and ammonia emissions have dropped 18 per cent since 1990.



STRATEGIES AND POLICIES FOR AIR POLLUTION ABATEMENT



These impressive achievements are detailed in the 160-page *Major Review of Strategies and Policies for Air Pollution Abatement*, which the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) has just

published. They are largely the result of the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, which was drawn up under the auspices of UN/ECE. This framework Convention and its seven Protocols have forced the countries that have signed up to them to make sweeping cuts in air pollution and also put political pressure on non-parties to keep their emissions down.

As well as assessing progress, the four-yearly *Major Review*—to which the Parties themselves contribute—describes the measures they have introduced to comply with the Convention and curb air pollution: e.g. legislation, economic instruments, technical requirements. The *Major Review* also includes tables with the emission levels of those air pollutants that are covered by the Protocols and maps of the most vulnerable ecosystems. Despite the generally excellent results that they have achieved over the past two decades, the Parties are not resting on their laurels. In November they will adopt a new Protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution at a meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden. This new Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone will set more ambitious targets for reducing transboundary air pollution.

Major Review of Strategies and Policies for Air Pollution Abatement, Sales No. E.99.II.E.14. US\$ 33. □

UN/ECE reviews Latvia and Lithuania's environmental performance

As part of its Environmental Performance Reviews series, UN/ECE has recently published reviews for Latvia and Lithuania. Part I of each review assesses the framework for environmental policy and management; Part II deals with the management of pollution and of natural resources; while Part III discusses economic and sectoral integration issues, such as environmental concerns in agriculture and food processing, human health, the environment and environmental concerns in energy. As far as Latvia is concerned, for the first time an environmental performance review has devoted an entire chapter to the issue of public participation in environmental decision-making.

Environmental Performance Review (EPR) assesses a country's efforts to reduce its overall pollution burden and manage its natural resources, to integrate environmental and economic policies and to strengthen cooperation with the international community. The main aim of the UN/ECE countries is to improve their individual and collective performance in environmental management, the

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS



LATVIA



UNITED NATIONS

ultimate challenge being to promote sustainable development and the convergence of environmental conditions and policies throughout Europe.

At its annual session from 20-24 September 1999, the Committee on Environmental Policy held Peer Reviews for the ERPs of Ukraine and Croatia. A ministerial round-

table discussion was also held on the Ukrainian review during the session. These two ERPs are expected to be issued in early January 2000.

Environmental Performance Reviews: Latvia, 1999, Sales No. E.99.II.E.8; *Lithuania*, 1999, Sales No. E.99.II.E.7. □

UPCOMING EVENTS

Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Gothenburg, Sweden) to Mark the Convention's 20th Anniversary, 29 November-3 December 1999



The 17th session of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution will mark the 20th anniversary of this Convention when it meets in Gothenburg, Sweden, from 29 November to 3 December 1999. A ministerial segment of the session will be devoted to the adoption and signing of a new multi-effect Protocol to the Convention to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone. Numerous information materials will be issued for the session, including a brochure on the new Protocol, a booklet on UN/ECE in your daily life: *A Fresh Breath of*

Air, a major review of strategies and policies for air pollution abatement, a booklet on acidification and a brochure on the impact of air pollution and development of the Convention.

The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution is one of the main means of protecting our environment. It was drafted after scientists demonstrated the link between sulphur emissions in continental Europe and the acidification of Scandinavian lakes, and later studies confirmed that air pollutants could travel several thousand

kilometres before deposition and damage occurred. This implied that cooperation at international level was necessary to solve problems such as acidification. The Convention was the first internationally legally binding instrument to deal with problems of air pollution on a broad regional basis. It was signed in 1979 and entered into force in 1983. It has greatly contributed to the devel-

opment of international environmental law and created the essential framework for controlling and reducing the damage to human health and the environment of transboundary air pollution. It is a successful example of what can be achieved through intergovernmental cooperation. Since its entry into force the Convention has been extended by eight protocols, including the new multi-effect Protocol. □

Conference on Status of the Older Population: Prelude to the Twenty-first Century, Sion, Switzerland 13-15 December 1999



The Population Activities Unit (PAU) of UN/ECE is organizing a conference on the status of the older population in Europe and North America in collaboration with the United States National Institute on Aging (NIA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Institut Universitaire Kurt Bosch (IKB). The venue of the conference will be the IKB campus in the Swiss alpine town of Sion. The democratic perspectives, the family and housing conditions, as well as the economic, health and social conditions of older persons are among the main themes that will be discussed during the Conference. Its aims are threefold: (1) to review the conditions of life of older persons in the last decade of this century; (2) to highlight findings from an ECE project to collect, disseminate and analyse micro-data samples from the 1990 round of censuses in Europe and North America; (3) to prepare an agenda of needed research in the field of ageing for the twenty-first century. The conference will also mark 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. □

ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Geneva, Switzerland, 19-21 January 2000

UN/ECE will organize a Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing + 5 Review in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNDP at Geneva from 19-21 January 2000. The issues to be addressed include: (i) women and the economy; (ii) institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; (iii) women and violence; and (iv) women in power and decision-making. The conclusions and recommendations, agreed by the meeting, will be transmitted to the Preparatory Committee of the June 2000 Special Session of the General Assembly. Drawing on the major trends, successes and setbacks characterizing the region in the subject areas covered by the meeting, the conclusions will focus on strategies and actions for promoting further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in these areas. The meeting will provide an opportunity to facilitate dialogue between NGOs and Governments. □



ECE Calendar 1999

November

- 1-4 Working Party on the Transport of Perishable Food-stuffs
- 3-5 Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development
- 3-5 Meeting on Consumer Price Indices
- 8-12 Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods
- 9 (p.m.)-11 COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY
- 9-12 Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles
- 15-16 Working Party on Land Administration
- 17-19 Working Party on Transport Statistics
- 22-23 Meeting on Energy Statistics (Paris, France)
- 29-30 Working Party on International Legal and Commercial Practice (Brno, Czech Republic)
- 29 (p.m.) Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range
-3 Dec. Transboundary Air Pollution (Gothenburg, Sweden)

December

- 3 Forum on Capacity Building to Improve Trade Finance and Investment Prospects in the Russian Timber Sector
- 13 (p.m.) Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear
-16

WHERE TO ORDER

The publications listed with sales prices may be ordered from: **United Nations Bookshop, Sales Unit, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland** and a number of bookstores in the ECE region. Send cheque or money order in US\$ made payable to: UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS.

Those publications listed without a sales price may be obtained from the Information Officer, Economic Commission for Europe, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Editorial

A Turning Point

A turning point? No, be reassured this is not one of those questions usually provoked at the approach of a year ending with a zero, even more so when it is the year 2000. But, quite simply an observation from which it will be necessary to draw conclusions during the preparation of the next budget, i.e. in one year.

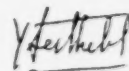
UN/ECE is a living organism in a changing world, the balance between its duties and its field of activities must therefore evolve. Only during the last six months, for example, has UN/ECE taken initiatives or responded to requests which are indicative of this evolution: the debate on the economic consequences of ageing has opened a new field of thought which will have to be enlarged; the conflict in Yugoslavia and the economic problems of the countries in south-east Europe have led ECE Committees to include their specific problems in their programmes of work and the Gas Centre has identified the decisions to be taken and the repairs needed to ensure the supply of energy to Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the secretariat has asked academics of the ECE region to take a critical look at its own analyses and proposals, and in cooperation with SECI, organized a seminar where the countries of south-east Europe defined their national and regional priorities in the sectors of energy, transport and water management before submitting them to the Stability Pact; in a completely different field, the regional preparations for Beijing + 5 have progressively taken shape and the secretariat has been approached by New York to prepare for Copenhagen + 5; a new Advisory Group on the Protection and Implementation of Intellectual Property Rights for Investment has been launched.

UN/ECE has thus displayed flexibility. It has shown that it is capable of responding to requests precisely because over the years it has invested in the analysis

of European economies, negotiated conventions and standards and developed a network of governmental experts. It is therefore necessary to continue this trend.

Consequently, is all for the best? I do not think so. For one thing, UN/ECE's potential is not fully utilized nor is its quality as a neutral forum or its ability to enable countries and enterprises with different interests to successfully work together. This is because at the same time it is not well known and, without a doubt, because it is a neutral multilateral place. On the other hand, even though under-utilized, with its actual programme of work and with the initiatives it undertakes, UN/ECE is stretched to the limit of its physical capabilities.

It will be necessary to concentrate the programme of work on priority sectors, to use available resources in time in one or two emerging areas which will gain in importance and are not covered by existing institutions, and to better use technical assistance and make ECE's work known. By way of illustration, might it not be better to have two issues of the Economic Survey of Europe per annum instead of three in order to have the time to organize debates in the countries on the topic of the studies and to take up subjects such as the distribution of income or sectoral policies?



Yves BERTHELOT

The Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Europe

For further information, contact:

The Information Officer,
Economic Commission for Europe,
Palais des Nations,
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Internet address: <http://www.unec.org>

Telephone: (+41 22) 917 44 44
or 917 27 27
Telex: 41 29 62
Telefax: (+41 22) 917 05 05
E-mail address: info.ece@unece.org

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